promote fishing industry in the country through co-operative action. During the last three years an amount of Rs. 4.37 Crore have been released to FISHCOPFED.

Alternative occupations for small and marginal farmers

†32. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Commission for Farmers, constituted by Government has indicated that marginal and small farmers intend to opt much profitable occupations instead of cultivation as it is not economically profitable;

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to initiate other occupations alongwith agriculture; and

(c) the action taken by Government for bio-conservation in bio-diversity rich States like Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Sikkim of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) National Commission on Farmers indicated that, as per national Sample Survey Organisation's survey, about 40% of farmers would like to quit farming if they had the option to do so. However, as such options are little, the Commission, in its Revised Draft National Policy for Farmers, recommended several measures to enhance productivity and income of small farms and farmers and to diversify employment opportunities by strengthening production-processing-value addition-marketing-consumer chain. The Commission also recommended several methods by which small and marginal farmers can gain efficiency and economy like cooperative farming, group farming by Self-Help Groups, small holders' estates, contract farming and Farmers' Companies etc. Government is also implementing several programmes like Bharat Nirman, National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme, schemes for promotion of small and micro enterprises and food processing industries and skill development training to create employment opportunities in the non-farm sector.

(c) The existing National Agriculture Policy aims at growth that is based on efficient use of resources and conserves soil, water and bio-diversity. Government are implementing several programmes in this regard like National Project on Organic Farming, Integrated Nutrient Management, Integrated Pest Management, National Horticulture Mission and Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in the North Eastern States, Sikkim, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Bird-flu in poultry in North East

33. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the latest outbreak of bird flu in poultry in the remote North-East was the H5N1 strain;

(b) if so, what preventive measures have been taken by Government, so far;

(c) in how many North-Eastern States this virus has spread; and

(d) how many people have, so far, been affected?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Control and containment measures were initiated immediately to stamp out and prevent the spread of the disease in poultry. The details are given in the Statement (*See* below).

(c) The disease appears to be restricted to a poultry unit in village Chingmeirong of East Imphal District of Manipur based on clinical and virological surveillance conducted till now.

(d) Disease is confined to poultry. There is no suspected human case of Avian Influenza as of now.

Statement

Measures taken to prevent the spread of the disease in poultry

The following measures were taken in Manipur to prevent the spread of Avian Influenza: .

1. Demarcation of infected and surveillance areas was carried out in accordance with the Action Plan. An area of 0-5 kms. was designated as the Infected Zone and a further area of 5-10 kms. was designated as the Surveillance Zone.

2. The poultry, both backyard and commercial, has been culled in a radius of 0-5 kms. around the affected farm premises. More than 3.36 lakh birds have been killed in the control operations.

3. Other infected materials such as poultry eggs, feathers, feed, feed materials, protective cloth used by the staff engaged in operations etc. has also been destroyed. More than 25,242 Kgs. of feed material and nearly 28,000 eggs have been destroyed.

4. Thereafter cleaning and dissemination of the infected premises/ area has been undertaken, which is under progress.

5. Physical surveillance in the 5-10 km. area is being continued to ascertain if there is any further unusual mortality. No unusual mortality has been reported in the surveillance zone as well as from anywhere else in the State.

6. The Government of India has maintained strategic reserve of poultry vaccines. The option of vaccination is thus available to the country. However, vaccination has not yet been introduced in the country.

7. The personnel involved in containment work were provided personal protective equipment and brought under cover of Tamiflu by the health authorities.

8. It is the policy of the Government of India to pay compensation to owner for culled poultry. The costs are being shared on a 50:50 basis with the State Government. More than 70 lakhs Indian Rupees has been paid as compensation.

9. State of the north-east specially those bordering outbreak countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar and China have been alerted.

10. Nationwide surveillance is continuing. More than 1,43,000 samples have been tested at High Security Animal Disease Laboratory (HSADL), Bhopal since February, 2006.

11. Testing for Avian Influenza has also been started at Regional Level *viz.*, Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratories, Kolkata, Bangalore, Pune and Jalandhar. So far about 37,000 samples have been tested in the regional laboratories.

12. The training of veterinary personnel in preparedness, control and containment is continuing.

13. A National Workshop on Preparedness, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza was organized at Pune during May, 2007 and recently a Regional Workshop of the North-Eastern States (Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and West Bengal) was organized at Kolkata by Government of India from 26-28th July, 2007.

General Body Election of CGECCS Ltd.

34. SHRI MOTIUR RAHMAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Board of Directors, Central Government Employees Consumer Cooperative Society Limited (Kendriya Bhandar) conducted election to the general body/delegates in the year 1999 for a period of three years;

(b) whether the election to the general body/delegates was conducted after eight years in February, 2007; and

(c) if so, the reasons for not conducting the election in 2002 itself and the action Government propose to take against the Central Registrar (Department of Cooperation) and BOD, Kendriya Bhandar for violating the provision of MSCS Act, 2002 and the bye-laws of Kendriya Bhandar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The election of the delegates of Representative General Body of a Multi-State Cooperative Society is the responsibility of the Board of Directors of the society. *Vide* amended bye-law no. 14 as approved by the general body,and registered on 9th May 2003, the term of the delegates to the general body was fixed for a period of 5 years. In the meantime, there was a dispute regarding membership of the Kendriya Bhandar agitated *vide* writ petition no.8983-84 of 2005 before the Delhi High Court. On the direction of the High Court of Delhi in the above writ petition, the Central Registrar decided the matter of membership *vide* order dated 8th December, 2006. The election to the delegates of general body have since been held in February, 2007. Further Returning Officer is the competent authority to decide the issue of disqualification of the candidates under the provisions of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002 if election is not conducted in time. Also infirmity regarding conduct of election can be agitated as an election dispute under section 84(2)(c) of the Act. Therefore, the question of any action against the Central Registrar does not arise.